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Los Alamos
NATIONAL LABORATORY

Newsbulletin

The newsweekly for Laboratory employees and retirees

President: Lab can affect the future as it has the past

On Monday, President Bill Clinton stood in Sullivan Field and thanked the Laboratory for what it has done to ensure the nation's freedom and asked for its help in securing the nation's economic future.

Joining the president in Los Alamos were U.S. Sens. Jeff Bingaman and Pete Domenici, U.S. Reps. Bill Richardson and Steve Schiff, Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary and New Mexico Gov. Bruce King. The visit was arranged at the request of Sen. Bingaman who asked Clinton to fulfill his campaign promise to be the first sitting president since John F. Kennedy to visit a weapons laboratory in a non-election year.

"For the first half century of Los Alamos' service, it was the leading edge of our nation's security," Clinton said, "and now as we go into the next half century, Los Alamos will be, as Sen. Bingaman said, the leading edge of our prosperity, developing and nurturing the technology that will put all these young Americans who are here today at the front of a new race, the race to compete and to cooperate in a world that is getting smaller, richer, more diverse, but very, very rigorous in its challenges."

Clinton, who stopped in Los Alamos on his way to California to garner support for his economic recovery package, said the United States has to prove that it can compete and win in the highly complex and competitive world of the



post-Cold War.

"Our job today is to preserve the American dream and America's leadership in a world that America has done so much to make," he explained. "We have to begin by putting our own house in order, by bringing down our enormous deficit and dealing with our health care crisis, which has produced a system that costs way too much and covers too few and leaves too many in the insecurity of daily living, knowing that at any moment they might lose the insurance they have."

"We have to follow policies that enable us to educate and train our people for a lifetime and then promote economic growth so that they will have jobs that they're educated for. These are the things we have to do in this time to be worthy successors to the American legacy we have inherited."

Clinton reminded the crowd that he has asked Congress to reduce the deficit by \$500 billion over the next five years with a combination of spending cuts and tax increases. "I have asked that all this money be put into a trust fund by law, so that nothing can be done with it but to reduce the debt so that the children of our country eventually will be able to get out from under the burden their parents and grandparents have left to them," he said. We owe that to the young people here."

Children played an important part in the Clinton visit. One look at the president's tie and that was apparent — the tie was dotted with children's faces. Before coming to Sullivan Field, Clinton met with three students who won the Laboratory's Super Computing Challenge this year, and students from throughout northern New Mexico were brought in to hear the address. Seated in bleachers behind the president was the Los Alamos High School senior class. The class had invited President Clinton to be its commencement speaker, but



At left, President Clinton acknowledges the crowd at Sullivan Field before his speech. Above, Clinton shakes hands, closely followed by the Secret Service, on his way out of Sullivan Field after his speech. Photos by LeRoy N. Sanchez, Laboratory Outreach (PA-3)

he was unable to accept the invitation. "This is almost as good, don't you think?" he asked the class. The response was a deafening cheer.

Clinton posed a question to the Laboratory that also reflected his concern for America's children and their future. "What is the opportunity we have right here to revolutionize the economy, not just for those thousands of you who are here, but for every American family, for every American young person?" he asked. "Can you affect the future of America as you have the past? I think the answer is a resounding yes."

He then proposed technology transfer as a tool for applying the immense resources of the weapons laboratories to the task of helping the American economy. "At Los Alamos alone there are 100 partnerships with industry," said Clinton, noting that Laboratory technology has led to the creation of 30 new companies.

"Before coming here today, I took a look at some of the projects under way at a facility that handles — listen to this — plasma ion implantation. Now that sounds like something a plastic surgeon would do, but it has nothing to do with the human body. Instead, it involves a steel vacuum chamber containing high-energy

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High-level discussion focuses on industrial collaborations, funding

In the midst of his whirlwind visit to Los Alamos, President Bill Clinton met privately for more than 20 minutes with Director Sig Hecker and the heads of Sandia and Lawrence Livermore National laboratories to discuss what the three weapons laboratories can do to help revitalize the economy and achieve the new national agenda.

Sitting in on that meeting were Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary, U.S. Sens. Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.) and Pete Domenici (R-N.M.), and U.S. Reps. Bill Richardson (D-N.M.) and Steve Schiff (R-N.M.). Also attending the meeting were White House staff and Hecker's executive staff director, Karl Braithwaite, who shared highlights of the meeting with the Newsbulletin.

Hecker opened the meeting by asking what the labs could do to help achieve the president's agenda. Clinton responded by telling the laboratory heads that the country needs the help of the laboratories to meet the competitive challenges it faces. He particularly noted the challenge of developing new products and services that would boost the economic recovery.

There was a significant discussion of the need to find ways to make major improvements in the current budgeting process in Washington, D.C., in order to provide a flexible and stable environment for

same way that defense efforts have resulted in technology being transferred to the private sector.

Sandia Labs President Al Narath talked of the need for a significant improvement in the ability of the country to put together strong partnerships and focused on major technologies that assist its most important industries, mentioning agile manufacturing, microelectronics and electronics.

John Nuckolls, director of Lawrence Livermore, mentioned "Reinventing Government," a book Clinton has endorsed. He noted that the book talks



Director Sig Hecker, center, presents his post-Cold War vision for the Laboratory to President Clinton on the tour of TA-35. Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary, who visited the Laboratory April 7, is on the left. Photo by Fred Rick

Sure, we can do it!

What do you do when the White House calls about a presidential visit and your boss is out of town? You go for it!

When Karl Braithwaite, Director Sig Hecker's executive staff director, got "the call" from the White House Scheduling Office around 1:30 p.m. last Wednesday inquiring about a possible Clinton visit to Los Alamos, he took all of five seconds to respond.

"The first thing that quickly ran through my mind was 'Sig's out of town and so is Jim Jackson.' Then I thought, the White House is never going to ask me this question again in my life. Without hesitating I said, 'Sure, we can do it.'"

The White House said the visit would be around the theme of defense conversion, and based on that information Braithwaite proposed an agenda. The president would go to two facilities, one an experimental site and the other the supercomputer center.

"We'd just had Energy Secretary O'Leary out on a similar visit," said Braithwaite, "and the visit I outlined over the phone with the White House in five minutes basically used a large portion of that and wasn't changed."

Aware that the last president to visit Los Alamos was John F. Kennedy, another young democrat pushing for change, Braithwaite suggested that President

long-term, challenging technology development programs. (The president later referred to this discussion in his speech at the football field). From there, the focus was on sharing laboratory expertise and the operative word was "collaboration."

Hecker noted the importance of the laboratories working with industry and said industry has shown great interest in these collaborations. He pointed out that Los Alamos has had more demand for private industry partnerships than it has funding to support.

He also noted that many of the products that come out of collaborations with private industry would have applications to defense, in much the

about looking for catalysts that stimulate significant changes and said the idea of an information infrastructure, or a high-speed data transmission "highway," might be just such a catalyst.

Secretary O'Leary noted during the meeting that there needs to be a clear assessment and inventory of technology capabilities at all the national laboratories to identify unnecessary overlap and improve efficiency.

The meeting concluded with the surprise presentation of a cake by President Clinton to O'Leary to celebrate her birthday. Clinton brought the cake from Washington, D.C.

—Jacqueline Paris-Chitanvis

Field as Kennedy had done almost 31 years ago. Although he was not in Los Alamos that December day in 1962, Bralthwaite has firsthand knowledge of how Kennedy's visit to the town remains with those who heard him speak.

"My wife, Jane, was a student at the high school when Kennedy came, and my secretary, who was in the sixth grade at the time, climbed the fence at the stadium to see him," he explained. "It was a wonderful experience they've never forgotten."

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ions, which can be pumped into metal surfaces or plastic surfaces and used to harden them so that they will last longer and do better.

"This could revolutionize America's ability to manufacture automobiles and other machines ... [increase] productivity ... and lower costs so we can once again begin to grow high-wage manufacturing jobs. And if it happens, it will happen because of the ideas that started here in the kind of partnerships we need for America's tomorrows."

While stressing that technology transfer will play an important role in the future of the national laboratories, Clinton acknowledged that a defense mission remains for the laboratories. "We have to continue to maintain the safety and reliability of our nuclear deterrent until all the nuclear weapons in the world are gone," he said. "We have to make sure that we can focus on new technologies to counter proliferation of nuclear biological and chemical weapons by other irresponsible countries around the world.

"There are still too many nations who have not learned the lesson of the Cold War and how much money was diverted by the United States and the Soviet Union from other important efforts. There are still too many nations who seem determined to define the quality of their lives based on whether they can develop a nuclear weapon or biological or chemical weapons that can have no other purpose than to destroy other human beings. It is a mistake and we should try to contain it and to stop it."

The president went on to say that "there is a peacetime commercial mission for these labs, and there is a national defense mission for these labs, and the line between those two missions is coming down fast. And there is a partnership with the private sector which will spread and grow and strengthen America's support for and understanding of what is done here."

Describing the labs as "our great national mind treasure," Clinton drew cheers when he noted that more Ph.D.s per capita are in Los Alamos than any other place on the planet. "It's pretty humbling when you're president and you walk into a room

and you realize you're lowering the average IQ of the room just by going in the door," he quipped.

Clinton concluded by again thanking Los Alamos "not merely for what was done in the Cold War and what has been done since, but for what you can and will do to secure a stronger, brighter future for all the American people. If we do our job, then perhaps 30 years from now another American president will be able to come to this very site and some of you who are now children will be here with your children.

"And you can say again, thank you; thank you to the labs; thank you to the men and women who used their minds to advance the cause of learning; thank you for the contributions you have made to the progress of the American dream. May it never stop."

Before leaving for the airport, President Clinton followed his long-held practice of mingling with the crowd. He shook hands with mostly students, accepted a T-shirt and cap and posed for a photo with several students who had spelled out a welcome for him with their T-shirts.

—Jacqueline Paris-Chitanvis